

CONFIDENT WYCOMBE SNAP BACK

AFTER two successive defeats in the Rothmans Isthmian League, Wycombe Wanderers could hardly have been relishing last night's (Monday's) trip to improved Southall. But the Blues produced a gritty and skilful performance to hit back from a goal down and take the points.

This won't go down as Wycombe's greatest display of the season but they showed a good deal of character and determination, throwing aside the problems of the previous two games. They took a long time to get into full swing, but eventually ran out thoroughly deserved winners.

When a team is struggling, confidence is usually the first thing to suffer and once the Blues began to get on top at Southall, the teamwork and passing really started to flow. Manager Ted Powell brought in

Southall 1, Wycombe Wanderers 2 REPORT BY STUART EARP

Gavin Fraser for his first full game and the youngster provided that added bite in midfield. Fraser is not the stockiest of midfield players but he never shirks a tackle and also has good vision. His enthusiasm at Western Road was catching.

Fraser, who was out of action last month due to suspension, is now available to play. His suspension, after a sending off during a college game, ended last week.

John Priestley also impressed after a slow start and showed a welcome willingness to go forward from midfield as did left-back Bob Davies, who is improving steadily. The performances of these three newcomers augers well for the season.

The home side deserved their lead in the 29th minute. The goal came from another set piece, this time a throw-in to the near post where the ball was headed

into the goalmouth. A weak half clearance fell just right for left-back Chris Hutchings to thunder a drive past the helpless Peter Spittle in goal.

Showing improvement in their approach to goal where the passing was more accurate, Wycombe looked industrious without ever testing 'keeper Gordon Linton. The lack of height and power up front let the visitors down but they stuck to their task and were rewarded after 41 minutes.

Priestley began the move with a surging run from midfield. He allowed Ian Pearson to take over and his deflected shot looped towards the far post where Dylan Evans took up possession. Two defenders chased him across goal but he got the vital touch in the ensuing scramble.

No doubt encouraged by the equaliser, Wanderers went from strength to strength in the second half and dominated the

remainder of the game while Southall lost any rhythm they had showed earlier and relied on the brilliance of Alan Devonshire — one of the most skilful players on the league circuit.

From the whistle Wanderers began a series of attacks and the pressure was maintained for 15 minutes. Pearson's fine turn and cross from the bye-line deserved a better fate while Priestley curled a shot inches past the post after Fraser and Davies had combined well for a quick free-kick.

Southall briefly replied when former Wycombe forward Derek Harris back headed into Spittle's arms but in the 59th minute Wanderers went ahead. Keith Mead sent a firm pass through the defence which was caught square. Tony Horseman turned quickly and drew the 'keeper before prodding the ball towards the net. Hutchings raced back in a bid to clear but 'Bodger's' timing was too good and the ball rolled slowly into the net.

The home side hit back strongly and this made for an exciting second half with play flowing from one end to the other. Wycombe, however, were looking more dangerous and their stream of crosses from either wing always looked likely to produce goals.

Southall's defence didn't help their cause by sending their clearances straight to Wycombe players. With time in which to play Wanderers replied with interest and kept the pressure well and truly on.

In the last 15 minutes there were a couple of anxious moments for the Blues. Closest effort came just before the close when Devonshire crossed into the box where Harris tried to turn in a shot. Spittle was quick to spot the danger and dived in bravely, injuring himself in the process. He was able to continue after treatment.

SOUTHALL: G. Linton; G. Towers, H. Manoe, D. Clough, C. Hutchings; C. Mullan (sub. C. Rapley 82 mins.), R. Knowles, K. Baker; A. Clarke, D. Harris, A. Devonshire.

WYCOMBE: P. Spittle; P. Birdseye, K. Mead, A. Phillips, R. Davies; J. Priestley, G. Fraser, M. Holfield; I. Pearson, D. Evans, A. Horseman. Sub. A. Davies (not used).

Referee: M. Jackson (Ewell).

Half-time: 1-1. **Goalscorers:** Wycombe — Evans (41), Horseman (59). Southall — Hutchings (29).